

MARVEL

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COMICS
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AUTHORITY

VISIONARIES

Knights of the Magical Light



ON A COLD NIGHT IN
NEW VALARAK IN
THESE DAYS SINCE
THE FALL OF SCIENCE,
A WARM FIRE IN A
FRIENDLY HEARTH IS
MOST WELCOME--

--BUT WHEN THAT
FIRE SWELLS AS IF
WITH A LIFE OF ITS
OWN, WHAT WAS
WELCOME BECOMES
A THING OF FEAR!

MOONS OF
PRYSMOS!

STAND
BACK,
GALADRIA!
YOU'LL BE
BURNED!

BUT
THERE'S
NO HEAT,
CRYOTEK! HOW
CAN THERE
BE FLAME
WITHOUT
HEAT--?

GALADRIA'S
RIGHT! THIS IS
NO ORDINARY
FIRE!

LOOK!
THERE'S A
FACE FORMING
IN THE
FLAMES--

QUEST OF THE FOUR TALISMANS

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WRITER • ARTIST
DAVE SIMONS • JANICE CHIANG
INKER • LETTERER
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---THE WIZARD OF
IRON MOUNTAIN,
MERKLYN!--

ATTEND ME,
YOU KNIGHTS OF
THE MAGICAL
LIGHT!

LESS THAN
A TWELVE-
MONTH PAST, I
SUMMONED YOU
TO IRON
MOUNTAIN--
THERE TO
RECEIVE THE
GIFT OF MYSTIC
POWER.

THIS DAY, LEORIC,
I SUMMON YOU
AND YOUR
KNIGHTS ONCE
AGAIN, AS I
SUMMON THOSE
YOU CALL THE
DARKLING LORDS--

--TO FACE A CRISIS
GREATER THAN ANY
YOU HAVE **KNOWN**
SINCE THE AGE OF
MAGIC BEGAN ANEW.

WE ARE
NOT **SLAVES**.
MERKLYN. WHAT
WE DO, WE DO
BY **FREE**
CHOICE.

TELL US
WHAT YOU
WANT.

WHEN YOU
ARRIVE AT IRON
MOUNTAIN, AND
NOT **BEFORE**.

DESPITE
WHAT YOU
MAY IMAGINE,
GOOD KNIGHT--

--IN THIS LIFE,
ONLY GODS AND
FOOLS ARE
TRULY **FREE** TO
CHOOSE.

HAIPH.

WHATEVER IT IS MERKLYN
WANTS, IF IT INVOLVES THE
DARKLING LORDS, ONE
THING'S SURE--

-- THERE'LL BE
TROUBLE.

IRON MOUNTAIN: A SEAT OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY IN PAST DAYS, NOW HOME OF THE HERMIT MAGE MERKLYN.

HERE THE WIND BLOWS BITTER AND COLD--

-- BUT NO MORE BITTER, NO MORE COLD, THAN THE ANGRY WORDS THAT ECHO BEFORE THE WIZARD'S IRON DOOR.

I'LL WARN YOU ONCE, LEORIC--

--IF THERE'S A REWARD TO BE WON, I AND MY DARKLING LORDS WILL WIN IT.

DARKSTORM, MERKLYN CALLED US HERE TO FACE A GRAVE CRISIS.

CAN'T WE BE ALLIES?

NEVER! YOU'RE WEAK, LEORIC. YOU WANT TO LEAD I WANT TO RULE.

WE'LL ALWAYS BE ENEMIES.

PITY.

THE TRUTH IS, I EXPECTED AS MUCH, BUT I HAD TO TRY, IF ONLY--

SILENCE!

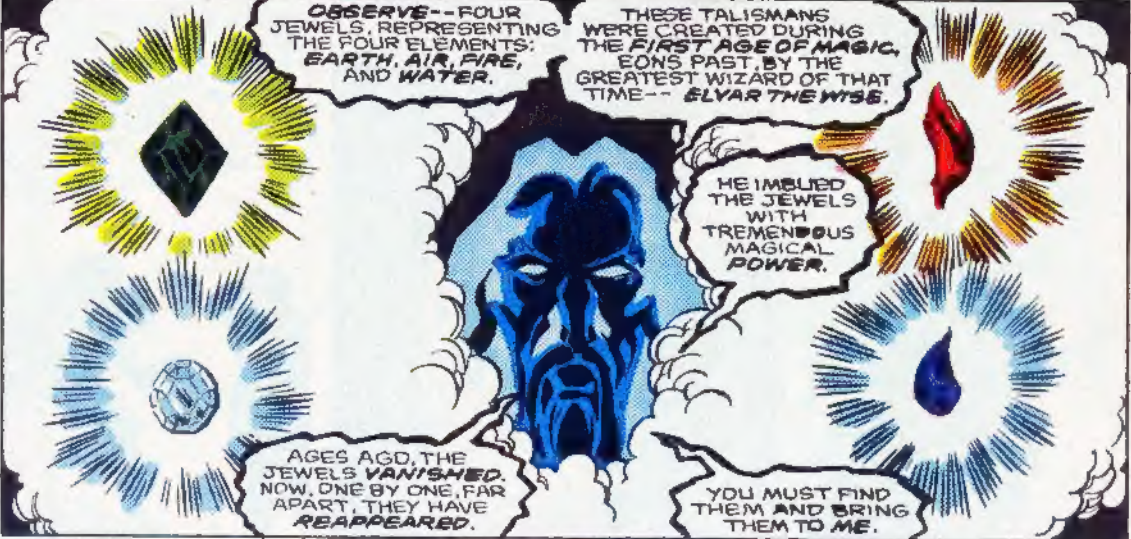
UHH! THE LIGHT--!

I HATE THE WAY MERKLYN MAKES HIS FACE APPEAR ON THE MOUNTAIN WALL! IT MAKES ME FEEL SO SMALL AND HELPLESS!

SPECTRAL KNIGHTS AND DARKLING LORDS HEED MY WORDS!

A TERRIBLE CRISIS IS UPON THE LAND, AND ONLY YOU HAVE THE POWER TO OPPOSE IT!

IS IT MY IMAGINATION, OR DOES MERKLYN'S VOICE SOUND WEAKER THAN IT DID THE LAST TIME WE WERE HERE?




OBSERVE-- FOUR
JEWELS, REPRESENTING
THE FOUR ELEMENTS:
EARTH, AIR, FIRE,
AND WATER.

THESE TALISMANS
WERE CREATED DURING
THE FIRST AGE OF MAGIC,
EONS PAST, BY THE
GREATEST WIZARD OF THAT
TIME-- **ELVAR THE WISE.**

HE IMBUED
THE JEWELS
WITH
TREMENDOUS
MAGICAL
POWER.

AGES AGO, THE
JEWELS **VANISHED.**
NOW, ONE BY ONE, FAR
APART, THEY HAVE
REAPPEARED.


YOU MUST FIND
THEM AND BRING
THEM TO ME.




OF COURSE, WE'LL
DO AS YOU **ASK--**
BUT WHAT SORT OF
POWER DO THESE
JEWELS **POSSESS?**

AND WHY
DO YOU
WANT
THEM?

SEPARATELY,
EACH JEWEL
HAS POWER
OVER ITS OWN
ELEMENT.



TOGETHER,
THEIR MAGIC IS
MULTIPLIED
FOUR TIMES.



HE WHO
HOLDS THE FOUR
ELEMENTAL
TALISMANS
CONTROLS THE
MOST EXCEPTIONAL
FORCE FOR **GOOD OR**
EVIL ON THIS
PLANET.

THE OLD
FOOL HAS TO
BE **INSANE**
TO TELL
US THIS!

DOESN'T
HE REALIZE--
SUCH POWER
MUST BE
MINE!

MERKLYN, IF THIS CRISIS IS AS GRAVE AS YOU SAY, SHOULDN'T VIRULINA AND I HAVE THE SAME LEVEL OF POWER AS THE MEN?

FOR ONCE, I AGREE WITH GALADRIA. YOU GAVE THE MEN MAGICAL STAFFS.

WHAT WILL YOU GIVE US?

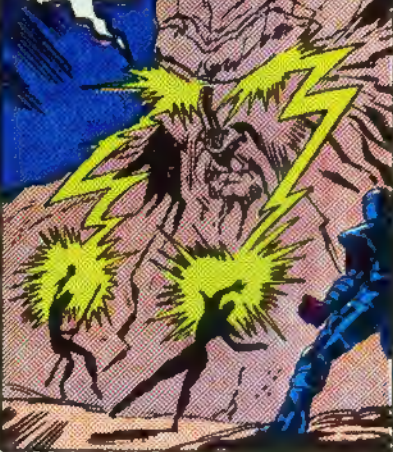


A POINT WELL RAISED, VIRULINA.

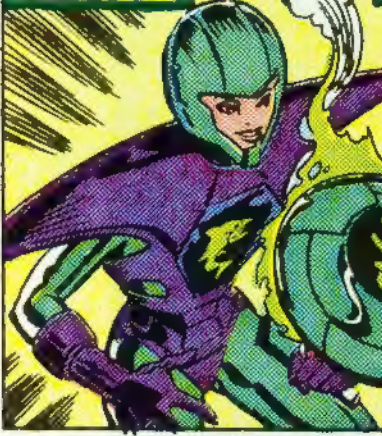
I GAVE YOUR COMPANIONS POWERS SUITED TO THEIR PERSONALITIES.



NOW I SHALL DO THE SAME FOR YOU!



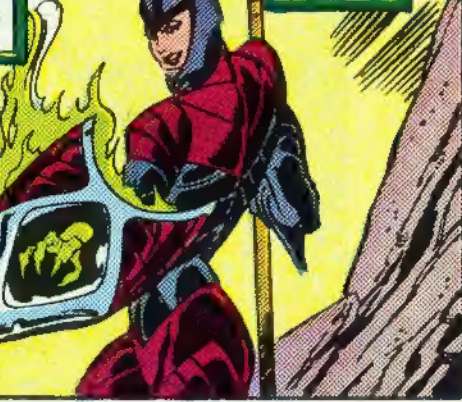
"GALADRIA, TO MATCH YOUR COMPASSIONATE HEART--"



"-- I PRESENT YOU WITH THE POWER OF HEALING."

"VIRULINA, BECAUSE YOUR HEART IS DARK WITH ENVY--"

"-- YOURS WILL BE THE POWER TO SICKEN THOSE YOU HATE."



NOW GO, ALL OF YOU. I WILL GIVE YOU GUIDES TO LEAD YOU ON YOUR QUEST, BUT MORE THAN THIS I CANNOT DO.

BRING ME THE TALISMANS OF ELEMENTAL POWER BEFORE THE HOUR OF THE SUMMER SOLSTICE.

FAIL ME NOT, LEST THE WHOLE WORLD SUFFER...

AND WITH A GROAN OF SHIFTING ROCK, THE MOUNTAINSIDE RETURNS TO ITS FORMER STATE, A FEATURELESS WALL OF UNLIVING STONE.



DARKSTORM,
YOU HEARD
MERKLYN.

SURELY THIS
MISSION IS MORE
IMPORTANT
THAN OUR PETTY
DISAGREEMENTS.

I OFFER MY HAND IN PEACE.
LET'S PUT OUR DIFFERENCES
ASIDE AND WORK **TOGETHER**.



DON'T BE
ABSRD.



ONLY A
SIMPLETON
LIKE **YOU**
WOULD TURN
HIS BACK ON
AN
OPPORTUNITY
LIKE THIS,
LEORIC.

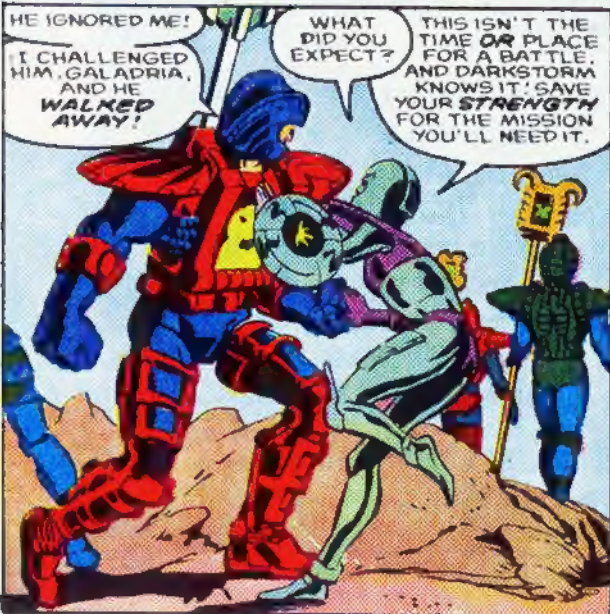
KEEP
YOUR
HAND.
KEEP
YOUR
PEACE.

THIS
IS
WAR.



DARKSTORM!
YOU WANT A
FIGHT? HOW
ABOUT RIGHT
NOW?

CRYOTEK,
NO!



HE IGNORED ME!
I CHALLENGED
HIM, GALADRIA,
AND HE
**WALKED
AWAY!**

WHAT
DID YOU
EXPECT?

THIS ISN'T THE
TIME **OR** PLACE
FOR A BATTLE.
AND DARKSTORM
KNOWS IT! SAVE
YOUR **STRENGTH**
FOR THE MISSION
YOU'LL NEED IT.



MORE AND MORE THESE DAYS,
I FEEL AS IF MY **BEAR**
PERSONALITY WERE TAKING
OVER, LEAVING MY HUMAN
MIND BEHIND.

SHE'S
RIGHT. I
MUST
CONTROL
MY
TEMPER.

AND THAT
WAY LIES
DISASTER...

INTERLUDE: DEEP WITHIN IRON MOUNTAIN, IN A CHAMBER OF SMOKE AND SHADOW, THE WIZARD MERRYW FEELS THOUGHTFULLY AT THE VISION REFLECTED IN A POOL OF STEAMING WATER.

GONE IS THE FIERCE SORCERER WHO REMADE FIRE AND STONE IN HIS IMAGE.

IN HIS PLACE, THERE STANDS A WEARY OLD MAN, GRAY WITH AGE, BENT BY TIME.

HURRY, YOU KNIGHTS OF THE MAGICAL LIGHT. FIND THE JEWELS. BRING THEM HERE.

IF YOU KNEW MY REAL REASON FOR WANTING THE TALISMANS, WOULD YOU BE SO QUICK TO SEEK THEM OUT?

I THINK NOT.

ALREADY, THE FORCES THAT WOULD DESTROY ME BEGIN THEIR WORK.

ONLY AN EFFORT OF WILL CAN HOLD THEM AT BAY.

BUT HOW MUCH LONGER CAN MY WILL SUFFICE?

HOW MUCH LONGER BEFORE I FADE LIKE THE LAST LIGHT OF DAY BEFORE THE COMING OF THE NIGHT?

MAKE HASTE, YOU SPECTRAL KNIGHTS AND DARKLING LORDS.

MAKE HASTE AGAINST THE DYING OF THE LIGHT...

THREE DAYS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE MEETING WITH MERKLYN AT IRON MOUNTAIN.

FOR CRYOTEK AND GALADRIA, THEY HAVE BEEN DAYS SPENT TRAVELING NORTH FROM NEW VALARAK, DEEP INTO THE UNKNOWN TERRITORIES, ON THE TRAIL OF AN ELUSIVE SPIRIT GUIDE...





TAKE A TASTE.

WHAT DO I SAY IF IT'S **AWFUL**? MEN HAVE SUCH **FRAGILE** EGOS. I'M ALMOST AFRAID TO--



HEY!

IT'S REALLY GOOD!



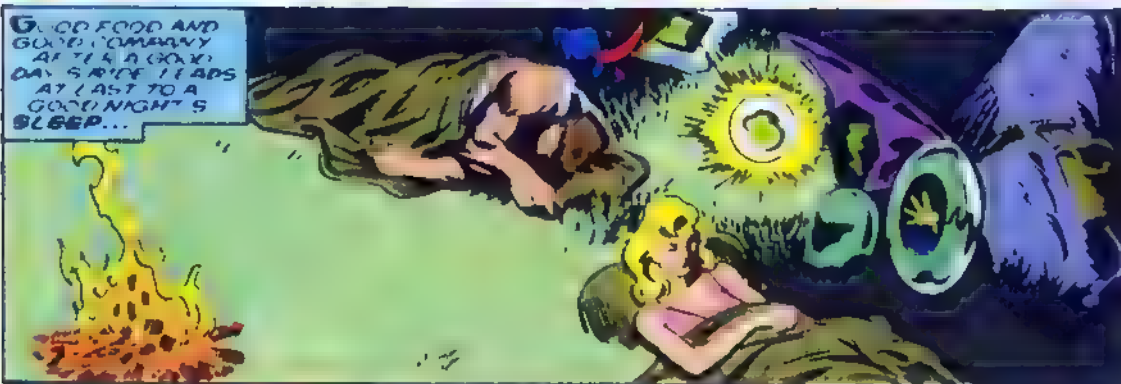
I TOLD YOU, GALADRIA. ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW ME--

... I'M FULL OF SURPRISES

HMM... I'LL BET YOU ARE



GOOD FOOD AND GOOD COMPANY AFTER A LONG DAY'S RIDE LEADS AT LAST TO A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP...



BUT EVEN THE BEST NIGHTS CAN BE RUDELY SHATTERED.

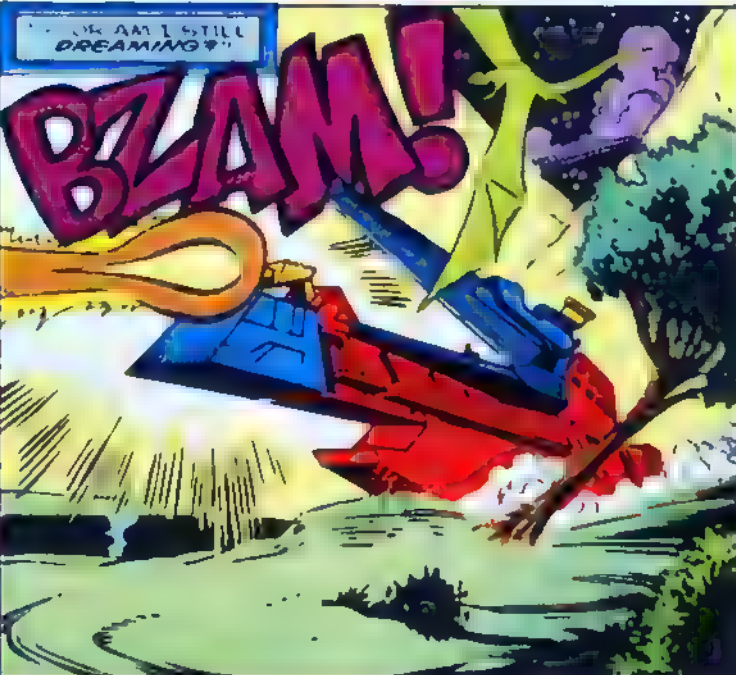
VAROOM!

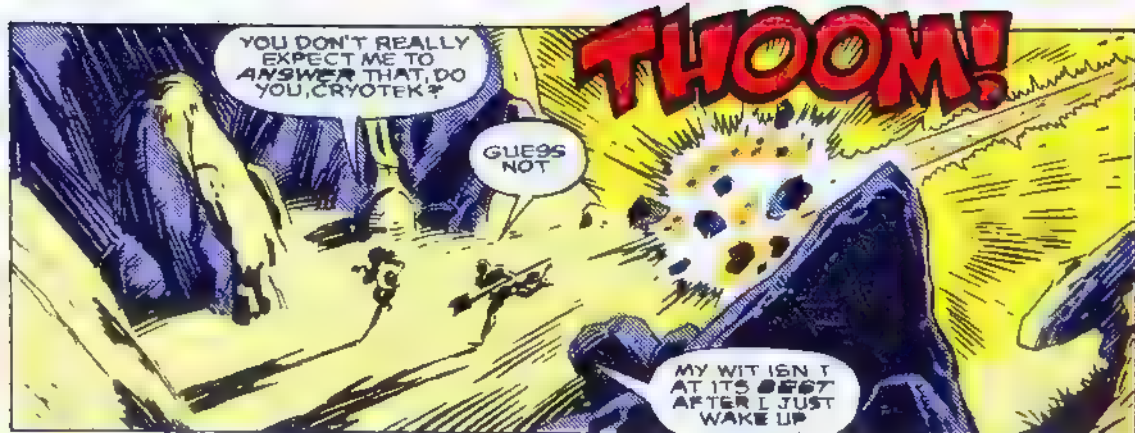
HUH? WHAT THAT NOISE

BY THE DARK STAR GALADRIA IS THAT THE BIGGER ASSAULT--



OR AM I STILL DREAMING?





SAVAGES, CRAVEX-- THERE MUST BE DOZENS OF THEM!

WELL? WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? BLAST THEM WITH OUR CATAPULTS!

I CAN'T! DAGGER ASSAULT WASN'T BUILT FOR CLOSE-IN COMBAT! I NEED DISTANCE! THE PROPER ANGLE--!

NAAAAIIYY!!



I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN YOU'D BE USELESS IN A PINCH

BOOF!

THAT DOES IT!



"O MIST-FILLED PITTS DARK, DARK, UNCLEAR--"



"--TOUGH ALL FORT ME WITH FROST FINGERED FEAR!"



CRAVEX AND HIS MAGICAL TOTEM-- SMOTHERING US WITH WAVES OF COLD TERROR!

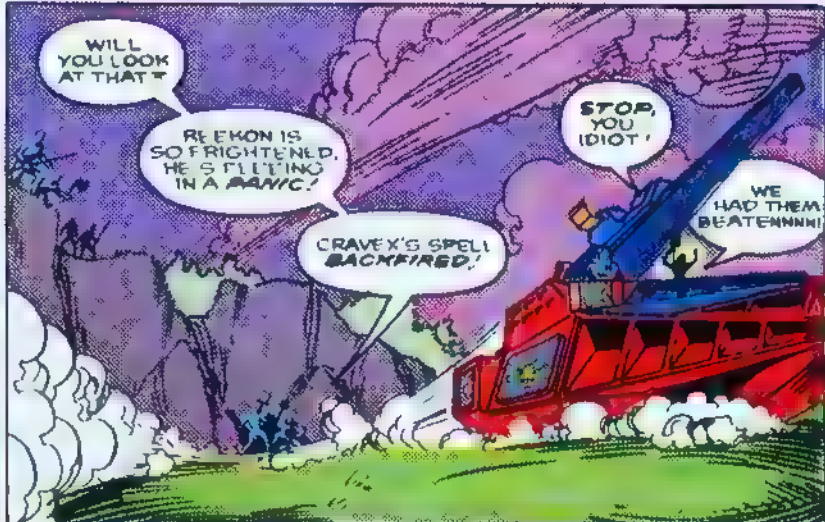
WE HAVE TO RESIST--

W WE'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES AFFECTED, C-CRYOTEK!



"CRAVEX'S FEAR SPELL CAUGHT SURPRISE, AS WELL..."

AKKK!



WILL YOU LOOK AT THAT?

RE-EKON IS SO FRIGHTENED, HE'S STILL IN A PANIC!

CRAVEX'S SPELL BACKFIRED!

STOP, YOU IDIOT!

WE HAD THEM BEATENNNNN!

NO, YOU WARRIORS!
I AM ~~TRAXX~~, LEADER
OF THE PEOPLE. WELCOME
TO OUR LAND

AN ENEMY OF THE
MACHINES IS A
FRIEND OF OURS

IT SOUNDS
AS IF REEKON
AND CRAVEK
ACTUALLY DID
US A FAVOR BY
ATTACKING IN
DAGGER
ASSAULT.
WYOTEK

THANKS FOR
PUTTING US
THANK I AM
CRYOTEK AND THIS
IS GAL ADRIA
WE'RE ON A
MARCH OF
PEACE

AAA GOOD PUT WE WERE
PROTECTING THE LAND
BUT YOU
AS YOU'LL SEE, MY
PEOPLE HAVE A SPECIAL
CONNECTION TO
THE LAND.

SPECIAL
CONNECTION?

AYE.

WHILE
SO MANY
COMMUNITIES
STARVED, AFTER
THE FALL OF THE
MACHINES, WE
THRIVED

IN OUR VALLEY
FOOD GROWS
ABUNDANT.

- THANKS TO
THE GOD IN THE
TREE WE HAVE
TO PROTECT OUR
LAND FROM THOSE
WHO WOULD
RAVAGE IT. THAT'S
WHY MY MEN AND
I WERE ON
PATROL WHEN WE -

SNY

PETROS WHERE DID
THAT BALL OF LIGHT
COME FROM?

I DON'T KNOW, THANK
IT WASN'T MY AWE
MINUTE AKA?

WHY DOES IT
CALL THE
GOD TREE?

RAID ON LIGHT
GOD TREE
ON THE

OUR GUIDE
FOUND THE ~~EARTH~~
TALISMAN, CRYOTEK
AND IT'S EMBEDDED
IN THAT TREE

LEVEL 1
SILVER EYE
ADULT

LET'S NOT JUMP
TO CONCLUSIONS,
GALADRIA.

TRAKK TELL
US ABOUT THIS
GOD-TREE OF
YOURS AND
THAT BLACK
JEWEL...

THE JEWEL BLESSES
OUR LAND, CRYOTEK

WHEN WE CAME
TO THIS VALLEY,
LESS THAN A
YEAR AGO, WE
WERE SICK AND
STARVING AND
WITHOUT
HOPE

ONE NIGHT,
IN A DREAM,
THE GOD TREE
SPOKE
TO ME

PLANT YOUR
SEEDS. IT SAID
IN MY SHADE
WILL YOU
PROSPER

AND PROSPER WE
HAVE-- WHATEVER WE
PLANT GROWS WITH
MAGICAL SPEED, TO
MAGICAL SIZE.

WE OWE OUR
SURVIVAL
TO THE GOD
TREE. WE WILL
DEPEND IT
WITH OUR
LIVES.

AH. WHAT
ABOUT SAVING
YOUR GOOD
FORTUNE TRAKK?

AS YOU SAY
PEOPLE ELSEWHERE
ARE STARVING--

THAT IS NO
CONCERN
OF OURS

WE
ARE THE
CHOSEN
ONES.
LET
OTHERS
FEND FOR
THEM
SELVES

WELL, ISN'T
THAT
INTERESTING?

THESE SAVAGES
ARE A SUSPICIOUS,
GADDDY LOT.

RESPECT

I CAN'T BELIEVE
YOU'RE SERIOUS

YOU WOULDN'T
REALLY LET
OTHER PEOPLE
STARVE WHILE
YOU HAVE THE
MEANS TO FEED
THEM. WOULD
YOU?

THE GOD
TREE CHOSE
THIS VALLEY
TO SAVE WHO
ARE WE TO
DEFEY HIS
WILL?

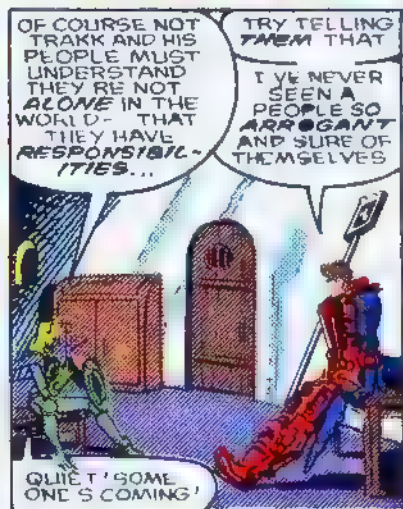
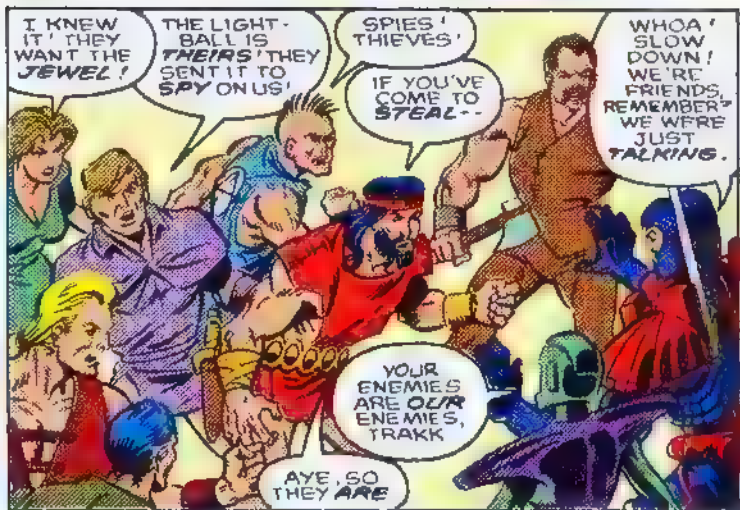
HOW DO
YOU KNOW
A GOD'S
WILL?

HOW DO YOU
EVEN KNOW
IF THAT IS
A GOD?

WHAT IF IT IS
JUST SOME KIND
OF MAGICAL JEWEL
WITH THE POWER TO
MAKE THINGS GROW?

SUPPOSE
WE SAID
WE NEEDED
THE JEWEL
DISCREETLY
SOMEONE WE
ASKED

AH





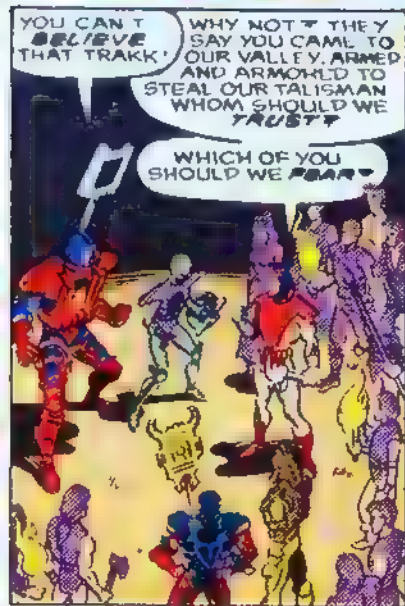
CRAVEK
AND
REBKNOW!

THEY SAID
YOU KNEW EACH
OTHER IN THIS.
AT LEAST, IT
APPEARS THEY
TOLD THE
TRUTH

EVERYTHING WE
TOLD YOU IS TRUE

THESE TWO
ARE RENEGADE
KNIGHTS--
THIEVES AND
TRAITORS!

WHAT?



YOU CAN'T
BELIEVE
THAT TRAKK!

WHY NOT? THEY
SAY YOU CAME TO
OUR VALLEY, ARMED
AND ARMOR'D TO
STEAL OUR TALISMAN
WHOM SHOULD WE
TRUST?

WHICH OF YOU
SHOULD WE FEAR?



THE ANSWER
TO THAT IS
SIMPLE, DEAR
FRIEND

"O MIST-
FILLED PITS,
DARK, DARK,
UNCLEAR



"... TOUCH
ALL FORTUNE
WITH FROST-
FINGERED
FEAR!"



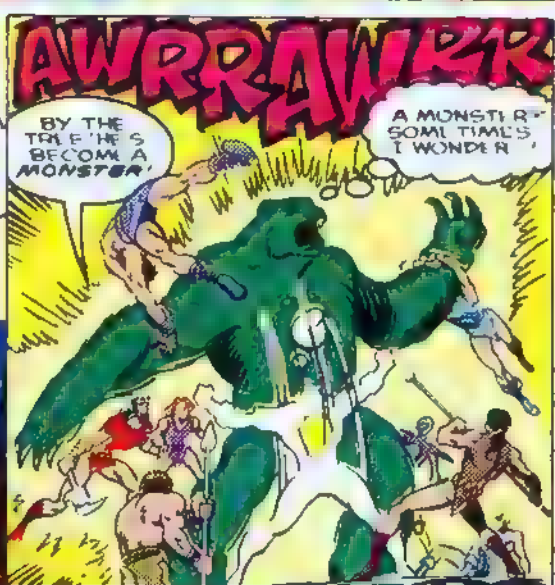
EYES WILD WITH UNTHINKING
TERROR, THE FARMERS STRIKE
OUT--

AND AS THE IRON
HEARTS POUND WITH
SPILL-CREATED PANIC,
CRYSTAL AND CALADRIA
STAGGER BEFORE
THE SUDDEN
ONSLAUGHT,
MOMENTARILY
OVERWHELMED.



THEN--

I NEED
POWER THE
POWER OF
MY BEAR
PERSONA!



AWRRRAWR

BY THE
TREE HE'S
BECOME A
MONSTER!

A MONSTER--
SOMETIME'S
I WONDER

WHEN I TAKE ON MY
MAGICAL PERSONA AND
BECOME THE BEAR, THE
MAN IN ME GOES
FAR AWAY!

IT'S A STRUGGLE
TO REMAIN HUMAN
IN MY THOUGHTS!

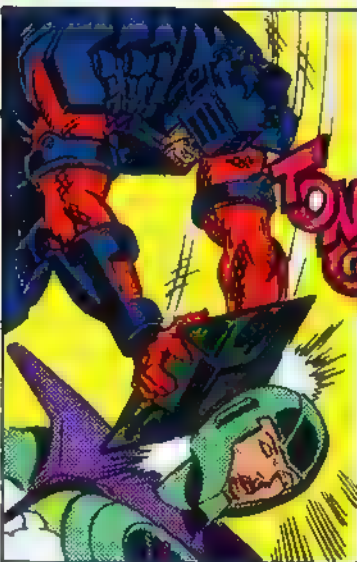
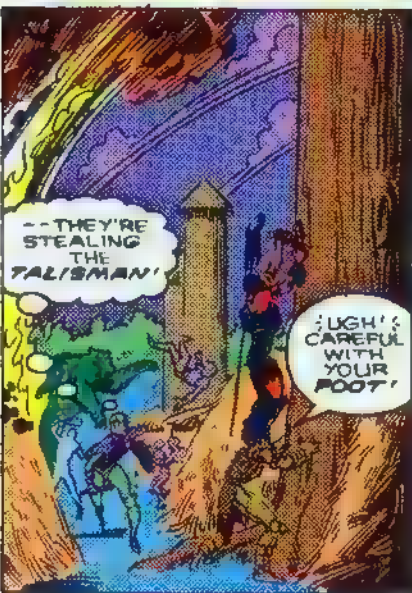
RAWR!

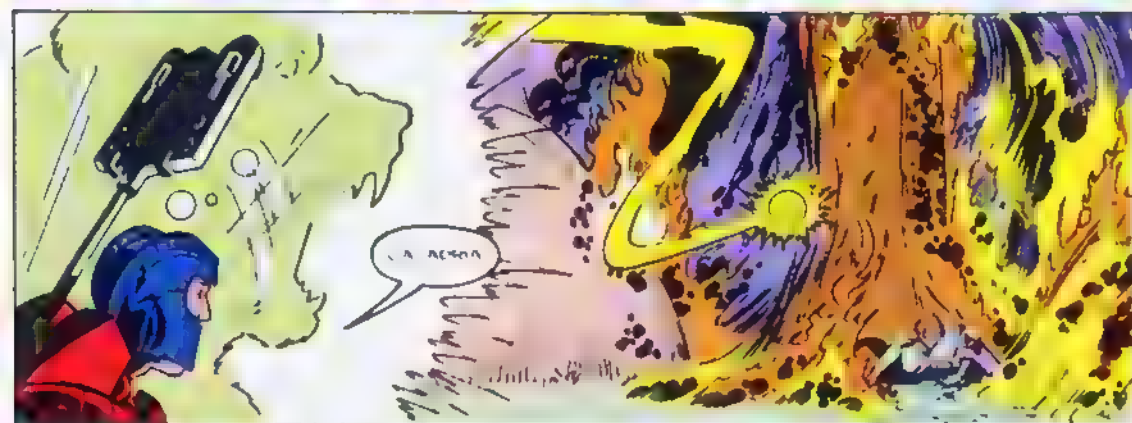
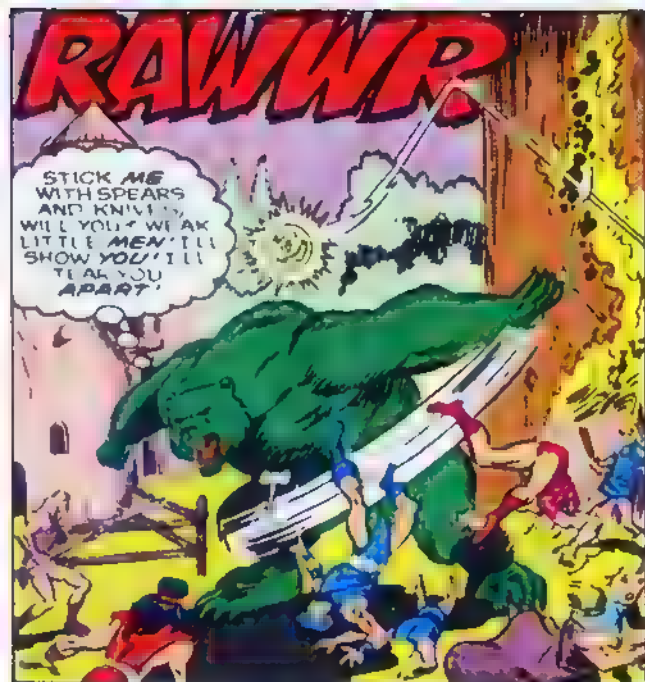
UNNOTICED
IN THE MELÉE,
A TORCH
FALLS AGAINST
A HAYSTACK

**THE
HAYSTACK
IGNITES.**

RAW! WAIT A MINUTE-- THE
FEAR I FELT A MOMENT
AGO IS GONE!

THAT MEANS CRAVEY
ISN'T CASTING HIS FEAR-
SPELL ANY MORE-- AND
THAT MEANS--





"... AND FILL
THE ARCHER'S
BOW WITH
MIGHT!"

TWOOM!



SHE'S BREATHING! I
NEVER SAW SUCH A
BEAUTIFUL SIGHT...

RYOTEK

DID I HEAR
SOMEONE SAY
SOMETHING ABOUT
LOVE?

THANK THE
MOONS, THE
CONCUSSION
BLEW OUT THE
FLAMES BEFORE
THEY COULD
REACH
GALADRIA.

BUT SHE
INHALED SO MUCH
SMOKE...

BREATHE,
GALADRIA!
IN THE NAME
OF LOVE
BREATHE!

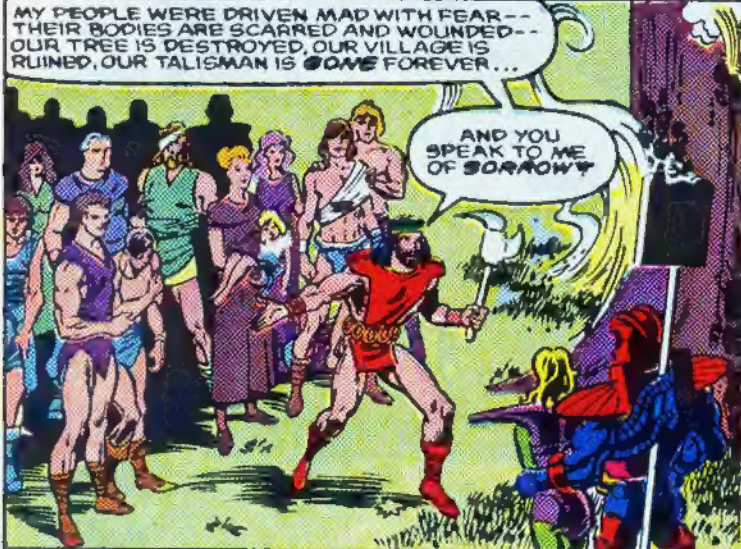
COUGH!
GASP!

AHEM
COUGH! ALL
THIS SMOKE
COUGH! HARD
TO TALK!

YOU'RE
CUTE
WHEN YOU
BLUSH.

OH MY...
TRAKK... I'M
SO SORRY ABOUT
THE JEWEL AND
YOUR TREE...

SORRY!



MY PEOPLE WERE DRIVEN MAD WITH FEAR--
THEIR BODIES ARE SCARRED AND WOUNDED--
OUR TREE IS DESTROYED, OUR VILLAGE IS
RUINED, OUR TALISMAN IS ~~GONE~~ FOREVER...

AND YOU
SPEAK TO ME
OF ~~SORROW~~



WE WERE ~~WRONG~~
ABOUT YOU, PERHAPS.
THOSE OTHERS WERE
OUR ~~TRUE~~ ENEMIES. I
SEE THAT NOW.

BUT WILL
KNOWLEDGE
HEAL OUR
~~PAIN~~



KNOWLEDGE
CAN'T.

I CAN.

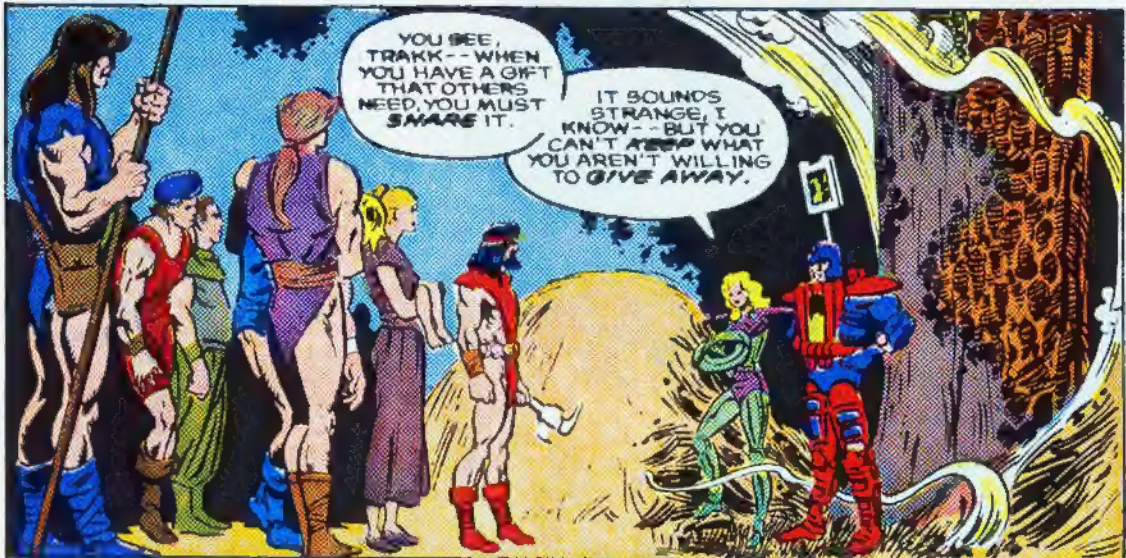


BUT GALADRIA, YOU'RE ~~WEAK~~...
SHOULD YOU TRY?

WEAK OR NOT, I
CAN'T REFUSE THESE
PEOPLE MY HELP

ALL RIGHT, BUT
BE CAREFUL.

MERKLYN GAVE
ME THE GIFT OF
HEALING. NOW WE
KNOW WHY.

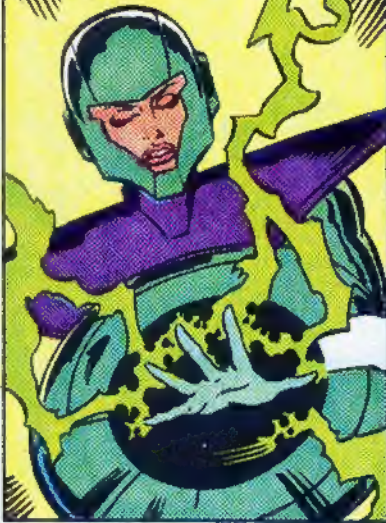


YOU SEE,
TRAKK-- WHEN
YOU HAVE A GIFT
THAT OTHERS
NEED, YOU MUST
~~SHARE~~ IT.

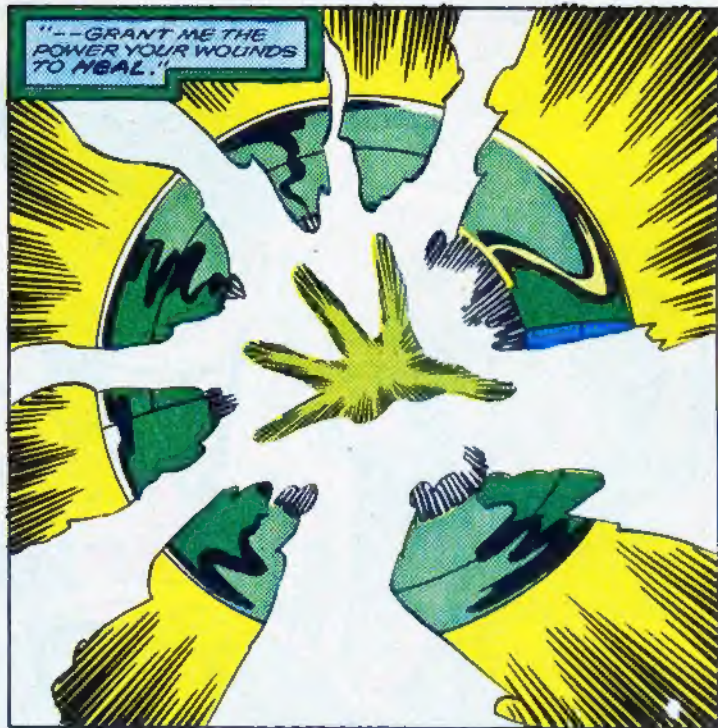
IT SOUNDS
STRANGE, I
KNOW-- BUT YOU
CAN'T ~~KEEP~~ WHAT
YOU AREN'T WILLING
TO ~~GIVE~~ AWAY.

I HEAR A VOICE--**MERKLYN'S VOICE**--IN MY MIND, WHISPERING THE WORDS OF A POEM-**SPELL**...

"BY WARMTH OF HEART, YOUR PAIN I FEEL--"



"--GRANT ME THE POWER YOUR WOUNDS TO HEAL."



IN THE MIST OF MIDNIGHT DARKNESS, IT'S AS IF THE **SUN** HAS MOVED FROM BEHIND A CLOUD.

LIGHT AND WARMTH FLOW OVER THE GATHERED VILLAGERS, TOUCHING EACH WITH A GOLDEN CARESS...

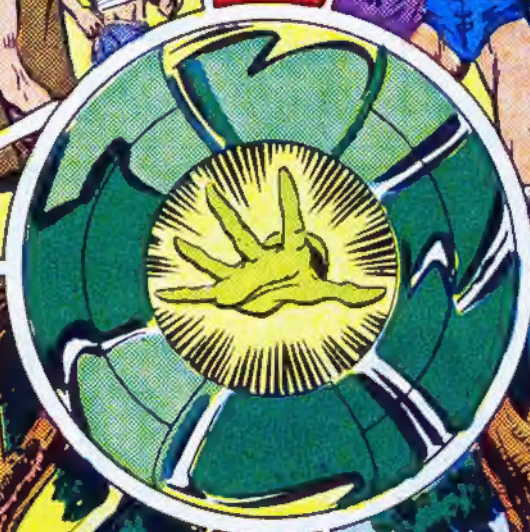


...A LIGHT SO BRIGHT THE WORLD ITSELF SEEMS TO DISAPPEAR...



AND WHEN THE
GOLDEN GLOW
FADES AT LAST TO
A GENTLE, TENDER
GLIMMERING--

--THOSE WHO
SUFFERED ARE
MADE WHOLE
ONCE MORE--



--AND THAT
WHICH WAS
DESTROYED--

--IS
REBORN.

